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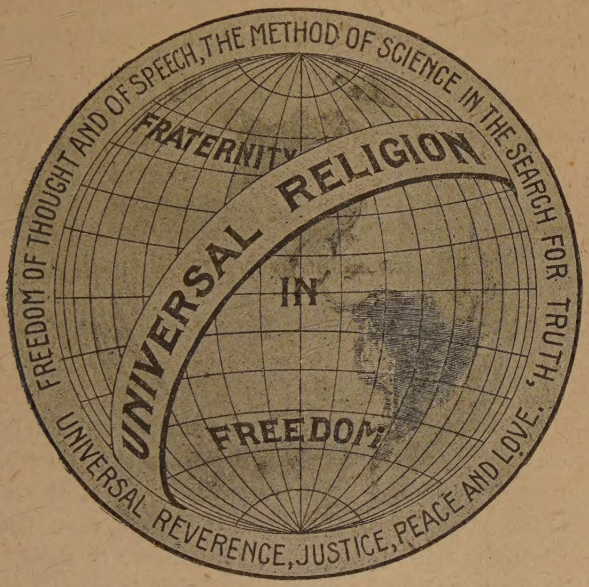
FREEDOM OF THOUGHT AND OF SPEECH, THE METHOD OF SCIENCE IN THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH,
FRATERNITY
UNIVERSAL RELIGION
IN
FREEDOM
UNIVERSAL REVERENCE, JUSTICE, PEACE AND LOVE.

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"Faith Built on Reason: A Survey of Free and Universal Religion." In the form of question and answer. By F. L. Abbot. Boston: James H. West Company.

Miss Abbot's catechism would be very interesting were it only for its exhibition of a filial piety of remarkable beauty. What father would not and should not be proud of such a tribute from his child, such a good endeavor to enter into the deep places of his thought and make the knowledge of their treasures current coin? As a reflection of Dr. Abbot's method and results the book is quite perfect, and more so, lamentably I cannot but conceive, as a reflection of his temper. In the former case we have here and there an expression which seems to exceed or fall short of what Dr. Abbot would himself have written. Thus, in one place, we are told that the universal element in religion is that part of it which is in accordance with absolute truth (p. 18, q. 32), but in another we are told that absolute knowledge can never be acquired by man (p. 22, q. 12), whence of course it follows that there can be no universal element in religion. Another apparent contradiction is that on pp. 32, 33, where the answer to the 14th question is that the suffering which attends ignorant wrong-doing warns a man that he is straying from the right path, while the answer to the 17th question is that the penalty of such wrong-doing is arrested development of the moral perceptions. There are some minor particulars where the necessity for condensed statements has given scant measure of the truth. For an example I note the identification of the Greek religion (p. 13, q. 8) with the Roman, when there was all the difference of a world of "fair humanities" and an aggregation of personified abstractions.

It goes without saying that one might break with the traditional thinking as completely as Dr. Abbot and yet not find his statement satisfactory. Prof. William James, for example, would find it very unsatisfactory. I think he would baulk at the answer to the second question, "What is religion?" It is, that thought is the root of religion, emotion its flower, and conduct

its fruit. I think I should say that emotion is its root. Particularly attractive is the forecast of the increasing sympathy of special religions. That they will "probably retain their own form and color" is a gracious qualification of the more general implication that the religion of the future will be the religion of scientific verification.

Miss Abbot's catechism seems to me much stronger as an exhibition of "faith built on reason" than as an exhibition of scientific religion, to which chapters II., III. and IV. are devoted. Reason is a much more inclusive word than science, and the best part of what is written here is in illustration of a reasonable, not a scientific faith. I would instance the answer to question 23, p. 37, which is a very characteristic one, characteristic of Dr. Abbot's thought. I would also instance the answer to question 9, p. 45, and that to question 4, p. 72, all of which thought has long been pleasantly familiar to the unscientific mind. The method of science is explained on pp. 20, 21, in the answer to question 5. It is a matter of three steps, the last of which is verification of the hypothesis by further observation. Neither with regard to God nor immortality does Miss Abbot suggest any such verification. I cannot conceive of any such as possible. But the reasonableness of belief in these ultimate realities is admirably set forth, though, on page 30, question 11. We miss Dr. Abbot's significant affirmation that an intelligible universe must be intelligent.

The endeavor to depreciate all religions that are not scientific tends to unintelligent definitions of all these and to melancholy depreciation of all the religion of the world that was pre-scientific, some of which seems to me to have been very good and to have borne a strong resemblance to some of the best that is here recommended. It may be objected to my objection that we are told (p. 20, p. 4) that the method of science is the method by which all human knowledge has been acquired. I do not believe this. "Science," we are told on the same page, "is the exact knowledge of whatever exists." Has the child any exact knowledge of its mother's love, but was Newton so sure of gravitation as the child of that? Spencer distin-

guished scientific from common knowledge. the former as having quantitative, the latter only qualitative prevision. I incline to think that religion belongs to the sphere of common knowledge. (This catechism at its best, I think, keeps well within the sphere). So thinking, I am not obliged to discredit the religion before science.

I am confining myself too much to objections and am doing no sort of justice to many of these answers, or to my own delight in them. Yet I am obliged to say in conclusion that the average temper of the book, which I regretted at the start, impresses me as exhibiting the sectarian, the exclusive, spirit to a remarkable degree. I have seldom, perhaps never, met a Unitarian of Dr. Abbot's culture and ability who has exhibited so much of this spirit. For this spirit delights in the disparagement of forms of thinking that are not one's own, while the unsectarian spirit delights in generous appreciation. It seems to me a pity that a catechism of this kind should be so extensively devoted to putting the Unitarians, or any other body of believers, in a logical hole. The fifth chapter, "Sectarianism," is mainly given over to an argument to prove the sectarianism of Unitarianism. "At first glance," we are told, "it does not seem just to say that Unitarians believe that they have the whole truth." It would have been better to trust that first glance than to attempt to bring about a logical conviction on so absurd a charge. Has Dr. Abbot ever known a Unitarian justifying it? Did not Channing long ago affirm that wherever the Bible conflicts with reason, reason must have the right of way ;and have not all later Unitarians been true to that standard? But there is the new Saratoga Preamble saying that the religion of Jesus is accepted as love to God and love to man. This, we are told, logically binds Unitarians to accept all the teachings of Jesus. I grant that it is clumsily expressed, but it is the sin against the Holy Ghost to impute a bad meaning where a good meaning is plainly intended. I accept the religion of Frank Abbot, holding, in accordance with his teachings, that practical religion is summed up in the struggle for ideal perfection. I think I might say this without being held, even logically, to belief in everything that Dr.

Abbot has written. If not, then so much the worse for logic. I fall back on sympathy and common sense. But I must not end upon this jarring note. I must again express my admiration of many parts of this catechism, probably the most of it, and rejoice that what is best, or seems so to me, is quite independent of the more strictly scientific constructions of the book.

JOHN WHITE CHADWICK.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

MR. CHADWICK'S CRITICISMS.

I am glad to be permitted to thank Mr. Chadwick for his generous recognition of my daughter's book. This I most sincerely do, all the more, because he puts aside some quite natural annoyance at the criticisms of Unitarianism which the book could not avoid making without abandoning its own essential and dominant purpose of explaining the reasons for Free Religion. Whoever understands the book will perceive that these criticisms spring out of the inherent necessity of the subject itself, not in the least out of any hostile animus or "temper" of any kind. Nevertheless, to disregard them so far as to say what Mr. Chadwick says of my daughter's work is a triumph of catholicity and does the highest honor to his own appreciative spirit.

Let me avail myself of this opportunity to put on record what her father ought to say in justice to her. She modestly disclaims too much in her preface when she disclaims all "originality." The bricks may be mine, but the house is wholly hers, and there is just as much originality in the house as there ever was in the bricks; if the house is only a new combination of old bricks, it is just as certain that the bricks were only a new combination of clay as old as the world—of truths as old as God. To the actual writing of the book I am anxious to confess that I contributed nothing but a very few minor and trivial suggestions after the whole manuscript was completed: the entire plan, development, order, sequence, diction, and style, all that is most admirable in the execution, belong to her alone.

I refrained most scrupulously from seeking to influence in any way her own free unfolding of the thought she wished to express, and nothing but this perfect freedom could possibly have produced a result so fine. I know I could never have written a book of this character so wonderfully well adapted to its peculiar purpose, and must in my turn disclaim all share in a special excellence of which I am indeed "proud"—and more than proud. The writer has grown up from infancy in the atmosphere of Free Religion, and the spiritual beauty of her book is as natural and unborrowed as that of the flowers of the fields and woods. For one, I wish no better "verification of religion," and hold none to be more "scientific," than reason thus verified by experience in a thoughtful book which is so truly and self-evidently religious.

Reaching over the daughter's head, however, Mr. Chadwick deals some gentle admonitory raps to the father's philosophy. This is altogether fair under the circumstances, and not in the least to be deprecated. On the contrary, it seems to justify, and in fact to require, some explanations not contained in the little book itself.

The first important point involved is the question whether emotion or thought should be regarded as the real "root" of religion. All metaphors are in danger of misleading, but perhaps the real issue may be brought out by asking whether the deeply religious soul would say, "I think God good because I love him," or whether it would say, "I love God because I think him good." That is, does the emotion of love toward God *generate* the thought of him as good, or does the thought of him as good *generate* the emotion of love towards him? I think history, comparative religion, and personal experience all answer this question in the same way: that, just as the soul *thinks* God to be good, bad, or unknowable, so it will *feel* towards him the emotion of love or fear, or (in the last case) no emotion at all. To me it seems that an emotion ungenerated or at least undirected by any thought whatever must go out as a candle goes out, when lowered into the carbonic acid gas at the bottom of a long disused well. How can we have a feeling of any sort

towards that of which we have no idea? How can we have a "Will to Believe" before we have some notion or conception of *what* to believe? In that consideration lies for me the singular irrationality of Prof. James's theory on this subject.

Another point raised by Mr. Chadwick is that reason is a larger word than science—that there may be a reasonable faith which is yet not scientific. No doubt this is true, so far as the words are very often used, especially when science is narrowed down to mean dealing with that alone which can be numbered, measured, or weighed. But there is a higher notion of science, determined by its universal and necessary method rather than the nature of only a part of its legitimate object-matter. The method of all science, whatever its object-matter, is of necessity the method of combined experience and reasoning, and all reasoning is syllogizing, as everybody has known since Aristotle (I will say nothing here of Hegel). The syllogism is the lock-step by which all the armies of scientific investigators march from discovery to discovery, while yet it is disguised in each investigating mind as completely as the constituent cells are disguised in the various tissues of the human body. The perfection of the syllogism is the scientific method itself, by which all actual discoveries, even in "pre-scientific religion," were made, however crudely and unconsciously, just as M. Jourdain "talked prose" all his life without knowing it. There is no "depreciation of pre-scientific religion" in all this, or in the little book, as Mr. Chadwick imagines. Neither "the child" nor "Newton" could "know what is not so;" so far as they really know at all, just so far they know exactly; the only difference between "common knowledge" and "scientific knowledge" is a mere difference of less and more. When "prescientific religion," as Judaism, discovered the Unity of God, it discovered a great truth as a *fact* whose deep underlying *grounds* science and philosophy are to-day making plain as never before; and it was natural reason working by the syllogism alone, and not supernatural revelation, which could discover either. No truth of Being, whether as fact of experience or as rational ground of the fact, ever was or could be discovered in any other way than by the

natural syllogistic working of the human mind; and that sole method of reason in whatever field is itself the method of science in its large and true significance. Hence everything reasonable is just so far scientific, too.

But Mr. Chadwick's fundamental criticism lies in his conclusion that "the average temper of the book" exhibits "the sectarian, the exclusive spirit to a remarkable degree," because he finds the essence of sectarianism in the spirit which "delights in the disparagement of forms of thought that are not one's own." Hence he deprecates a chapter of the book which, as he sadly misinterprets it, has no better aim than to put the Unitarians in a "logical hole." Well—in this criticism Mr. Chadwick sees no reason for conviction except mere feeling; he is self-consistent and quite true to his own belief that emotion, not thought, is the "root of religion." But this belief quite disqualifies him for understanding the real spirit of those who, knowing that a religion not founded on reason can be nothing but a superstition founded on unreason, give themselves head and soul to the pursuit of *truth*, as the supreme test of all that is right in belief and beautiful in spirit. Passing quite beyond my daughter's book, Mr. Chadwick throws the blame back on me, and makes this personal statement about myself: "I have seldom, perhaps never, met a Unitarian of Dr. Abbot's culture and ability who has exhibited so much of this [sectarian and exclusive] spirit." I make no complaint of this statement. Mr .Chadwick has a perfect right to make it, if he believes it true. But, in the service of a cause infinitely more important than either of us, I propose to apply to it this supreme test, and to ask in the light of facts: *Is it true?* The question implies a story.

The Unitarians organized their National Conference at New York in 1865, on a platform professing their duty to be "disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ" and to devote themselves to "the service of God and the building up of the kingdom of his Son." To many Unitarians of that day, this oath of allegiance to an *individual fellow-man*, as Lord and King by the grace of God, was treason to their own intellects and consciences, and I

was one of them. But the promise was made to consider the "Broad Church question" at the next meeting, and we all waited.

At Syracuse, in 1866, I raised this question, and moved a reform of the preamble-platform by dropping all mention of Jesus, planting the Conference on the conception of Christianity as "the universal diffusion of love, righteousness, and truth," and seeking the reconciliation of "collective Christian activity and individual freedom of thought' in "unity of spirit rather than uniformity of belief." It was a great moment in Christian history, unlikely to come again, when the most intellectual body of Christians in the world were called to accept or reject the ideal of a free and purely spiritual Christianity, emancipated from all historical trammels of tradition and ritualism. How was this splendid historical opportunity met?

In the "Monthly Journal of the American Unitarian Association" for November, 1866, Rev. Charles Lowe, Secretary of the Association, wrote in his report of the proceedings: "The speech of Mr. Abbot in support of his proposition gave, we believe, the tone to the whole discussion which followed. It was calm, though earnest, and was pervaded by such a Christian spirit as to win the confidence and respect of those who most widely dissented from his views. He disclaimed, on the part of those who stood with him, any desire to dictate to the convention or to bring discord into its proceedings. But he said that, with the existing Preamble and Constitution, they could not without the sacrifice of sincerity and self-respect remain in the Conference; and that they heartily wished to do so, and thus to share in the great work to which it was pledged, 'We implore you,' said he, 'do not compel us to go out.' * * * The vote was decided and emphatic, sustaining by an overwhelming voice the present Preamble."

That vote, passed after some six hours of discussion and deliberation, in the light of that earnest entreaty for the right to remain a Unitarian without surrendering the higher right of free thought and self-respect, was a formal decree of banishment and exile for opinion's sake alone. It was a deliberate

abandonment of Channing's great principle of "spiritual freedom," a deliberate adoption of Bellow's narrow policy of denominationalism and sectarian exclusiveness. How was it received by those Unitarians who did not happen to be delegates and voters at Syracuse?

By a nearly unanimous apathy, acquiescence, and silence, unbroken down to 1902! A few great-thoughted and great-hearted Unitarians spoke out boldly in protest through pulpit or press or private letters, while others still organized their protest in the Free Religious Association. Two old heroes of conservative Unitarianism felt the shame.

Rev. Dr. Orville Dewey, acording to his "Autobiography and Letters," wrote to his daughter, November 21, 1866: "The fact is, the Conference is wrong. If it expects the young men to act with it, it should adopt a platform on which they can conscientiously and comfortably stand. The conduct of the majority, in my opinion, is inconsistent and ungenerous." To Dr. Bellows himself he wrote, March 20, 1867: "Certainly I think the minority in the Conference has had hard measure from the majority; and I liked Abbot's sermon as much as you heard I did."

Rev. Dr. W. H. Furness, in his published discourse on "The Authority of Jesus," April 10, 1867, said: "A minority of the liberal body, the Radicals so-called, protest against the acknowledgment of the Lordship of Jesus, because it is understood to rest solely or mainly on the ground of his authoritative teaching. This protest is based upon the recognition of the sole sovereign authority of God, or, in other words, of the private conscience. So far so well. In thus protesting, our brothers have the warrant of impregnable truth, and the protest is conceived in the spirit of Jesus himself, and proves them to be maintaining the very cause to which and for which he gave his life. Had I been present at the last Conference at Syracuse, I could not have hesitated to give my cordial assent to the broader ground of fellowship which was proposed in the form of an amendment to the Preamble of the resolutions adopted at the previous Conference in New York."

Even Mr. Chadwick himself, in a sermon on "Who is my Brother?" which was published in "The Friend" for November, 1868, recounting two years later the story of the third National Conference, exclaimed in the fervor, enthusiasm, and chivalrous generosity of his youthful days: "We were all carrying in our hearts one man, Abbot of Dover, who, as you all know, insists that he is not a Christian, and we felt that, if we could not make our doorways wide and high enough for him, we should win the battle only in part. * * * We will never rest until the Conference is open to the coming of his stainless feet. Is it not too absurd to think of, that we are now in a position to admit the emissaries of that enemy of all freedom, truth and progress, the Roman Catholic Church (and I would not have it otherwise), and are not in a position to admit this strong man-child of our own loins, this lover of all truth and seeker for all good? Do you fear that it might not do to make our fellowship as broad and free as this? Friends, between this and Romanism lies our choice. Principles never stop half way. A creed is a creed, though it is contained in one sentence or one word, and any creed accepted as a finality is a sin against the ever-lasting, ever-growing truth. And for myself, though you could make a statement that would not vary by a hair's breadth from my own belief concerning God and Jesus and all the great facts and relations that are the staple of the world's most deep reflection,—though it should express my own belief better than I could express it myself, so that, reading it, I should exclaim, 'There! I could never exactly state myself, but you have done it': if you could do all this, and should do it, and then ask me to sign this statement *as a creed,* I would no more do it than I would sign the Nicene creed, the Westminster catechism, and the contents of the Koran, rolled into one. Of the perfect law of liberty it is most true that he that sins against its least particular has offended in all: *falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus.*"

I confess I cannot now even copy these splendid words without a fresh glow of admiration and deep gratitude—and, alas, with a sadness deeper still. What has happened? More than a generation ago, the Unitarian denomination deliberately ex-

cluded from its fellowship all except those who would bear the Christian name and confess themselves "disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ"; today it still excludes all except those who will bear the Christian name and confess that they "accept the religion of Jesus" (which is and can be nothing but the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ). That is the ancient history, and the modern history, too. The old issue is the new issue still; the situation is unchanged, and my own attitude towards it is unchanged. But Mr. Chadwick has changed his attitude towards it. In 1868, he saw "exclusiveness" in the Unitarian Conference, but in 1902 he sees it in the man it excludes! Then he found the feet of the non-Christian "stainless," but now he finds them thickly crusted and stained with the mud of "sectarianism." Then he would "never rest" until the Conference made its "doorways wide and high enough" to admit Christian and non-Christian on equal terms; now he rests quite contented that they admit Christians and shut out non-Christians altogether. Then he spurned a creed, even if it expressed his own thought exactly; now he defends a creed, even when it expresses his thought "clumsily."

Many a sad change comes to us all inevitably as we grow old, but I know of nothing in human life more pathetic or more sad than such a change as this. It is the defeat of youth's glorious ideals by the tyrannous brutality of the world,—abandonment of the "principles" which "never stop half way" for the party-policies that never even start towards the ideal at all. It would be too cruel to blame this dying-out of youthful enthusiasm for the absolutely true and right, because it is the commonest of spectacles; but I know of no use for religion except to prevent it. The defeat is not a necessary one, as the fresh and resplendent example of Mabini shows. This grizzled and crippled old Filipino patriot is exiled to Guam by the tyrant nation which has invaded his country, conquered his people, and destroyed the fair young republic which he founded in imitation and admiration of our own. While all the rest of his compatriots, with Aguinaldo at their head, have bowed their necks to the yoke and sworn allegiance to the mighty oppressor, Ma-

bini alone refuses to buy freedom with a lie on his lips, or repatriation with voluntary submission to irresistible power, in words which will ring through the ages to the glory of his people and the shame of ours: "I cannot get over the idea that others shall legislate for me and my people, and in so doing govern us. It is better to die in exile than to prostitute my conscience, for at best I have but a few years to live." Never were words more plain, homely, or sublime. They put us by the side of Cæsar, but Mabini by the side of Cato of Utica. They revive one's shaken faith in the indomitableness of the moral will in man. Do they not place the unsubmissive freedom-champion of 1868 above the submissive creed-champion of 1902? For the divine spirit of *unsubmissiveness to untruth and worry,* which shines so splendidly in the sermon quoted above from the Mr. Chadwick of 1868, is now identified by the Mr. Chadwick of 1902 with the spirit of "sectarianism and exclusiveness!" I am no more "exclusive" now than he was then, and I admire still the chivalrous generosity of the imprudently brave young reformer more than I admire the prudent acquiescence in creed-tyranny which now characterizes the mature diplomat of denominationalism.

But I will make a clean breast of it. Mr. Chadwick now charges me with being more "exclusive" than any Unitarian he knows, or at least remembers. Well—in a sense which he does not understand or mean, his charge is true. For I am indeed just as exclusive as the syllogism—no more and no less. The syllogism, which, however disguised, is the logical form of all proof, proves and can prove nothing except in virtue of what logicians call the "law of excluded middle." This law means that, whenever in precisely the same sense one proposition affirms what another proposition denies, one of the two propositions must be true and the other false; that the truth of either excludes the truth of the other; and that there cannot possibly be a third proposition or middle ground between them. Without this necessary exclusion of a middle ground between two contradictory statements, neither truth nor the knowledge of truth would be possible; the law of excluded middle is the

foundation of all reasoning and the condition of all reasonableness. Hence, I confess that I am just as exclusive as the syllogism and its law of excluded middle; for such exclusiveness as this is simply the spirit of rationality, the love of truth, the abhorrence of all falsity. What is a man worth who is not exclusive in this sense? Mr. Chadwick's mistake lies in confounding this love of truth which would exclude error with that other exclusiveness which says to the neighbor, "Stand back, for I am holier than thou." The latter is indeed hateful and detestable, and I humbly trust I have none of it. But I have no apology to make for the rational exclusiveness of the insight which tells me that Christianity and Freedom contradict each other beyond the possibility of reconciliation, and that the Unitarian denomination, striving fatuously to reconcile them, strives to discover the impossible middle ground between two contradictory principles. For every man, woman, and child on the face of the earth who loves freedom and recognizes the natural and necessary equality of all fundamental human rights, I feel myself in profound sympathy and fellowship; but for those who would sanction infringement of those rights in the humblest member of our race, or arrogates for any individual or people a false and unjust sovereignty over another, I have none—*none*. If that be exclusiveness, Mr. Chadwick may make the most of it. But I hope still that his youthful enthusiasm for freedom may blaze up in his heart once more, move him to strike another stout blow for freedom, and perchance lead the Unitarian Conference from Christianity to Free and Universal Religion. It matters little now to me; it is too late to undo the effects of the banishment of 1866. But, though far on in my seventh decade, I should indeed rejoice to see this once valiant and chivalrous reformer redeem the brave promise of his youth and win so glorious a victory at last for "love, righteousness, and truth."

FRANCIS E. ABBOT.

Cambridge, Nov. 12, 1902.

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